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THE DUKE'S CHILDREN.

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CHAPTER XXVIII. MRS. MONTACUTE JONES'S GARDEN-PARTY.

It was known to all the world that Mrs. Montacute Jones's first great garden-party was to come off on Wednesday, 16th June, at Roehampton. Mrs. Montacute Jones, who lived in Grosvenor Place and had a country-house in Gloucestershire, and a place for young men to shoot at in Scotland, also kept a suburban elysium at Roehampton, in order that she might give two garden-parties every year. When it is said that all these costly luxuries appertained to Mrs. Montacute Jones, it is to be understood that they did in truth belong to Mr. Jones, of whom nobody heard much. But of Mrs. Jones—that is, Mrs. Montacute Jones—everybody heard a great deal. She was an old lady who devoted her life to the amusement of—not only her friends, but very many who were not her friends. No doubt she was fond of lords and countesses, and worked very hard to get round her all the rank and fashion of the day. It must be acknowledged that she was a worldly old woman. But no more good-natured old woman lived in London, and everybody liked to be asked to her garden-parties. On this occasion there was to be a considerable infusion of royal blood—German, Belgian, French, Spanish, and of native growth. Everybody who was asked would go, and everybody had been asked—who was anybody. Lord Silverbridge had been asked, and Lord Silverbridge intended to be there. Lady Mary, his sister, could not even be asked, because

her mother was hardly more than three months dead; but it is understood in the world that women mourn longer than men.

Silverbridge had mounted a private hansom cab in which he could be taken about rapidly—and, as he said himself, without being shut up in a coffin. In this vehicle he had himself taken to Roehampton, purporting to kill two birds with one stone. He had not as yet seen his sister since she had been with Lady Canticrip. He would on this day come back by The Horns.

He was well aware that Lady Mab would be at the garden-party. What place could be better for putting the question he had to ask! He was by no means so confident as the heir to so many good things might perhaps have been without overdue self-confidence.

Entering through the house into the lawn he encountered Mrs. Montacute Jones, who, with a seat behind her on the terrace, surrounded by flowers, was going through the immense labour of receiving her guests.

"How very good of you to come all this way, Lord Silverbridge, to eat my strawberries."

"How very good of you to ask me! I did not come to eat your strawberries, but to see your friends."

"You ought to have said you came to see me, you know. Have you met Miss Boncassen yet?"

"The American beauty? No. Is she here?"

"Yes; and she particularly wants to be introduced to you; you won't betray me, will you?"

"Certainly not; I am as true as steel."

"She wanted, she said, to see if the eldest son of the Duke of Omnium really did look like any other man."

"Then I don't want to see her," said Silverbridge, with a look of vexation.

"There you are wrong, for there was real downright fun in the way she said it. There they are, and I shall introduce you." Then Mrs. Montacute Jones absolutely left her post for a minute or two, and taking the young lord down the steps of the terrace, did introduce him to Mr. Boncassen, who was standing there amidst a crowd, and to Miss Boncassen the daughter.

Mr. Boncassen was an American who had lately arrived in England with the object of carrying out certain literary pursuits in which he was engaged within the British Museum. He was an American who had nothing to do with politics and nothing to do with trade. He was a man of wealth and a man of letters. And he had a daughter who was said to be the prettiest young woman, either in Europe or in America, at the present time.

Isabel Boncassen was certainly a very pretty girl. I wish that my reader would believe my simple assurance. But no such simple assurance was ever believed, and I doubt even whether any description will procure for me from the reader that amount of faith which I desire to achieve. But I must make the attempt. General opinion generally considered Miss Boncassen to be small, but she was in truth something above the average height of English women. She was slight, without that look of slimness which is common to girls, and especially to American girls. That her figure was perfect the reader must believe on my word, as any detailed description of her arms, feet, bust, and waist would be altogether ineffective. Her hair was dark brown and plentiful; but it added but little to her charms, which depended on other matters. Perhaps what struck the beholder first was the excessive brilliancy of her complexion. No pink was ever pinker, no alabaster whiteness was ever more like alabaster; but under and around and through it all there was a constantly changing hue which gave a vitality to her countenance which no fixed colours can produce. Her eyes, too, were full of life and brilliancy, and even when she was silent her mouth would speak. Nor was there a fault within the oval of her face upon which the hypercritics of mature age could set a

finger. Her teeth were excellent both in form and colour, but were seen but seldom. Who does not know that look of ubiquitous ivory produced by teeth which are too perfect in a face which is otherwise poor? Her nose at the base spread a little—so that it was not purely Grecian. But who has ever seen a nose to be eloquent and expressive, which did not so spread? It was, I think, the vitality of her countenance—the way in which she could speak with every feature, the command which she had of pathos, of humour, of sympathy, of satire, the assurance which she gave by every glance of her eye, every elevation of her brow, every curl of her lip, that she was alive to all that was going on—it was all this, rather than those feminine charms which can be catalogued and labelled, that made all acknowledge that she was beautiful.

"Lord Silverbridge," said Mr. Boncassen, speaking a little through his nose, "I am proud to make your acquaintance, sir. Your father is a man for whom we in our country have a great respect. I think, sir, you must be proud of such a father."

"Oh, yes—no doubt," said Silverbridge awkwardly. Then Mr. Boncassen continued his discourse with the gentlemen around him. Upon this our friend turned to the young lady. "Have you been long in England, Miss Boncassen?"

"Long enough to have heard about you and your father," she said, speaking with no slightest twang.

"I hope you have not heard any evil of me."

"Well!"

"I'm sure you can't have heard much good."

"I know you didn't win the Derby."

"You've been long enough to hear that."

"Do you suppose we don't interest ourselves about the Derby in New York? Why, when we arrived at Queenstown I was leaning over the taffrail so that I might ask the first man on board the tender whether the Prime Minister had won."

"And he said he hadn't."

"I can't conceive why you of all men should call your horse by such a name. If my father had been President of the United States, I don't think I'd call a horse President."

"I didn't name the horse."

"I'd have changed it. But is it not

very impudent in me to be finding fault with you the first time I have ever seen you! Shall you have a horse at Ascot?"

"There will be something going, I suppose. Nothing that I care about."

Lord Silverbridge had made up his mind that he would go to no races with Tifto before the Leger. The Leger would be an affair of such moment as to demand his presence. After that should come the complete rupture between him and Tifto.

Then there was a movement among the elders, and Lord Silverbridge soon found himself walking alone with Miss Boncassen. It seemed to her to be quite natural to do so, and there certainly was no reason why he should decline anything so pleasant. It was thus that he had intended to walk with Mabel Grex; only as yet he had not found her.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Boncassen, when they had been together about twenty minutes; "we shall be here all the summer, and all the fall, and all the winter. Indeed, father means to read every book in the British Museum before he goes back."

"He'll have something to do."

"He reads by steam, and he has two or three young men with him to take it all down and make other books out of it; just as you'll see a lady take a lace shawl and turn it all about till she has trimmed a petticoat with it. It is the same lace all through, and so I tell father it's the same knowledge."

"But he puts it where more people will find it."

"The lady endeavours to do the same with the lace. That depends on whether people look up or down. Father, however, is a very learned man. You mustn't suppose that I am laughing at him. He is going to write a very learned book. Only everybody will be dead before it can be half finished." They still went on together, and then he gave her his arm and took her into the place where the strawberries and cream were prepared. As he was going in he saw Mabel Grex walking with Tregear, and she bowed to him pleasantly and playfully. "Is that lady a great friend of yours?" asked Miss Boncassen.

"A very great friend indeed."

"She is very beautiful."

"And clever as well—and good as gold."

"Dear me! Do tell me who it is that owns all these qualities."

"Lady Mabel Grex. She is daughter of Lord Grex. That man with her is my particular friend. His name is Frank Tregear, and they are cousins."

"I am so glad they are cousins."

"Why glad?"

"Because his being with her won't make you unhappy."

"Supposing I was in love with her—which I am not, do you suppose it would make me jealous to see her with another man?"

"In our country it would not. A young lady may walk about with a young gentleman just as she might with another young lady; but I thought it was different here. Do you know, judging by English ways, I believe I am behaving very improperly in walking about with you so long. Ought I not to tell you to go away?"

"Pray do not."

"As I am going to stay here so long I wish to behave well to English eyes."

"People know who you are, and discount all that."

"If the difference be very marked they do. For instance, I needn't wear a hideous long bit of cloth over my face in Constantinople because I am a woman. But when the discrepancies are small then they have to be attended to. So I shan't walk about with you any more."

"Oh, yes, you will," said Silverbridge, who began to think that he liked walking about with Miss Boncassen.

"Certainly not. There is Mr. Sprotte. He is father's secretary. He will take me back."

"Can not I take you back as well as Mr. Sprotte?"

"Indeed, no; I am not going to monopolise such a man as you. Do you think that I don't understand that everybody will be making remarks upon the American girl who won't leave the son of the Duke of Omnitum alone? There is your particular friend Lady Mabel, and here is my particular friend Mr. Sprotte."

"May I come and call?"

"Certainly. Father will only be too proud—and I shall be prouder. Mother will be the proudest of all. Mother very seldom goes out. Till we get a house we are at the Langham. Thank you, Mr. Sprotte. I think we'll go and find father."

Lord Silverbridge found himself close to Lady Mabel and Tregear, and also to Miss Cassewary, who had now joined Lady Mabel. He had been much struck with

the American beauty, but was not on that account the less anxious to carry out his great plan. It was essentially necessary that he should do so at once, because the matter had been settled between him and his father. He was anxious to assure her that if she would consent, then the duke would be ready to pour out all kinds of paternal blessings on their heads. "Come and take a turn among the haycocks," he said.

"Frank declares," said Lady Mabel, "that the hay is hired for the occasion. I wonder whether that is true."

"Anybody can see," said Tregear, "that it has not been cut off the grass it stands upon."

"If I could find Mrs. Montacute Jones I'd ask her where she got it," said Lady Mabel.

"Are you coming?" asked Silverbridge impatiently.

"I don't think I am. I have been walking round the haycocks till I am tired of them."

"Anywhere else then."

"There isn't anywhere else. What have you done with your American beauty? The truth is, Lord Silverbridge, you ask me for my company when she won't give you hers any longer. Doesn't it look like it, Miss Cassewary?"

"I don't think Lord Silverbridge is the man to forget an old friend for a new one."

"Not though the new friend be as lovely as Miss Boncassen?"

"I don't know that I ever saw a prettier girl," said Tregear.

"I quite admit it," said Lady Mabel. "But that is no salve for my injured feelings. I have heard so much about Miss Boncassen's beauty for the last week, that I mean to get up a company of British females, limited, for the express purpose of putting her down. Who is Miss Boncassen that we are all to be put on one side for her?"

Of course he knew that she was joking, but he hardly knew how to take her joke. There is a manner of joking which carries with it much serious intention. He did feel that Lady Mabel was not gracious to him, because he had spent half an hour with this new beauty, and he was half inclined to be angry with her. Was it fitting that she should be cross with him seeing that he was resolved to throw at her feet all the good things that he had in the world! "Bother Miss Boncassen,"

he said; "you might as well come and take a turn with a fellow."

"Come along, Miss Cassewary," said she. "We will go round the haycocks yet once again." So they turned and the two ladies accompanied Lord Silverbridge.

But this was not what he wanted. He could not say what he had to say in the presence of Miss Cassewary, nor could he ask her to take herself off in another direction. Nor could he take himself off. Now that he had joined himself to these two ladies he must make with them the tour of the gardens. All this made him cross.

"These kind of things are a great bore," he said.

"I daresay you would rather be in the House of Commons; or, better still, at the Beargarden."

"You mean to be ill-natured when you say that, Lady Mab."

"You ask us to come and walk with you, and then you tell us that we are bores!"

"I did nothing of the kind."

"I should have thought that you would be particularly pleased with yourself for coming here to-day, seeing that you have made Miss Boncassen's acquaintance. To be allowed to walk half an hour alone with the acknowledged beauty of the two hemispheres ought to be enough even for Lord Silverbridge."

"That is nonsense, Lady Mab."

"Nothing gives so much zest to admiration as novelty. A republican charmer must be exciting after all the blasées habituées of the London drawing-rooms."

"How can you talk such nonsense, Mabel?" said Miss Cassewary.

"But it is so. I feel that people must be sick of seeing me. I know I am very often sick of seeing them. Here is something fresh—and not only unlike, but so much more lovely. I quite acknowledge that. I may be jealous, but no one can say that I am spiteful. I wish that some republican Adonis or Apollo would crop up, so that we might have our turn. But I don't think the republican gentlemen are equal to the republican ladies. Do you, Lord Silverbridge?"

"I haven't thought about it."

"Mr. Sprott, for instance."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing Mr. Sprott."

"Now we've been round the haycocks, and really, Lord Silverbridge, I don't think we have gained much by it. Those

forced marches never do any good." And so they parted.

He was thinking with a bitter spirit of the ill result of his morning's work when he again found himself close to Miss Boncassen in the crowd of departing people on the terrace. "Mind you keep your word," she said. And then she turned to her father. "Lord Silverbridge has promised to call."

"Mrs. Boncassen will be delighted to make his acquaintance."

He got into his cab and was driven off towards Richmond. As he went he began to think of the two young women with whom he had passed his morning. Mabel had certainly behaved badly to him. Even if she suspected nothing of his object, did she not owe it to their friendship to be more courteous to him than she had been? And if she suspected that object, should she not, at any rate, have given him the opportunity?

Or could it be that she was really jealous of the American girl? No; that idea he rejected instantly. It was not compatible with the innate modesty of his disposition. But no doubt the American girl was very lovely. Merely as a thing to be looked at she was superior to Mabel. He did feel that as to mere personal beauty she was in truth superior to anything he had ever seen before. And she was clever too, and good-humoured; whereas Mabel had been both ill-natured and unpleasant.

CHAPTER XXIX. THE LOVERS MEET.

LORD SILVERBRIDGE found his sister alone. "I particularly want you," said he, "to come and call on Mabel Grex. She wishes to know you, and I am sure you would like her."

"But I haven't been out anywhere yet," she said. "I don't feel as though I wanted to go anywhere."

Nevertheless she was very anxious to know Lady Mabel Grex, of whom she had heard much. A girl if she has had a former love passage says nothing of it to her new lover; but a man is not so reticent. Frank Tregear had perhaps not told her everything, but he had told her something. "I was very fond of her; very fond of her," he had said. "And so I am still," he had added. "As you are my love of loves, she is my friend of friends." Lady Mary had been satisfied by the assurance, but had become anxious to see the friend of friends. She resisted at first her brother's entreaties. She felt

that her father, in delivering her over to the seclusion of The Horns, had intended to preclude her from showing herself in London. She was conscious that she was being treated with cruelty, and had a certain pride in her martyrdom. She would obey her father to the letter; she would give him no right to call her conduct in question; but he and any other to whom he might entrust the care of her should be made to know that she thought him cruel. He had his power to which she must submit. But she also had hers—to which it was possible he might be made to submit. "I do not know that papa would wish me to go," she said.

"But it is just what he would wish. He thinks a good deal about Mabel."

"Why should he think about her at all?"

"I can't exactly explain," said Silverbridge, "but he does."

"If you mean to tell me that Mabel Grex is anything particular to you, and that papa approves of it, I will go all round the world to see her." But he had not meant to tell her this. The request had been made at Lady Mabel's instance. When his sister had spoken of her father's possible objection, then he had become eager in explaining the duke's feeling, not remembering that such anxiety might betray himself. At that moment Lady Cantrip came in and the question was referred to her. She did not see any objection to such a visit, and expressed her opinion that it would be a good thing that Mary should be taken out. "She should begin to go somewhere," said Lady Cantrip. And so it was decided. On the next Friday he would come down early in his hansom and drive her up to Belgrave Square. Then he would take her to Carlton Terrace, and Lady Cantrip's carriage should pick her up there and bring her home. He would arrange it all.

"What did you think of the American beauty?" asked Lady Cantrip when that was settled.

"I thought she was a beauty."

"So I perceived. You had eyes for nobody else," said Lady Cantrip, who had been at the garden-party.

"Somebody introduced her to me, and then I had to walk about the grounds with her. That's the kind of thing one always does in those places."

"Just so. That is what 'those places' are meant for, I suppose. But it was not apparently a great infliction." Lord

Silverbridge had to explain that it was not an infliction—that it was a privilege, seeing that Miss Boncassen was both clever and lovely; but that it did not mean anything in particular.

When he took his leave he asked his sister to go out into the grounds with him for a moment. This she did almost unwillingly, fearing that he was about to speak to her of Tregear. But he had no such purpose on his mind. "Of course you know," he began, "all that was nonsense you were saying about Mabel."

"I did not know."

"I was afraid you might blurt out something before her."

"I should not be so imprudent."

"Girls do make such fools of themselves sometimes. They are always thinking about people being in love. But it is the truth that my father said to me the other day how very much he liked what he had heard of her, and that he would like you to know her."

On that same evening Silverbridge wrote from the Beargarden the shortest possible note to Lady Mabel, telling her what he had arranged. "I and Mary propose to call in B. Square on Friday at two. I must be early because of the House. You will give us lunch.—S." There was no word of endearment—none even of those ordinary words which people who hate each other use to one another. But he received the next day at home a much more kindly-written note from her:

"DEAR LORD SILVERBRIDGE,—You are so good! You always do just what you think people will like best. Nothing could please me so much as seeing your sister, of whom of course I have heard very very much. There shall be nobody here but Miss Cass. —Yours most sincerely, M. G."

"How I do wish I were a man!" his sister said to him when they were in the hansom together.

"You'd have a great deal more trouble."

"But I'd have a hansom of my own, and go where I pleased. How would you like to be shut up at a place like The Horns?"

"You can go out if you like it."

"Not like you. Papa thinks it's the proper place for me to live in, and so I must live there. I don't think a woman ever chooses how or where she should live herself."

"You are not going to take up woman's rights, I hope."

"I think I shall if I stay at The Horns much longer. What would papa say if he heard that I was going to give a lecture at an institute?"

"The governor has had so many things to bear that a trifl[e] such as that would make but little difference."

"Poor papa!"

"He was dreadfully cut up about Gerald. And then he is so good! He said more to me about Gerald than he ever did about my own little misfortune at Oxford; but to Gerald himself he said almost nothing. Now he has forgiven me because he thinks I am constant at the House."

"And are you?"

"Not so much as he thinks. I do go there, for his sake. He has been so good about my changing sides."

"I think you were quite right there."

"I am beginning to think I was quite wrong. What did it matter to me?"

"I suppose it did make papa unhappy."

"Of course it did; and then this affair of yours." As soon as this was said Lady Mary at once hardened her heart against her father. Whether Silverbridge was or was not entitled to his own political opinions—seeing that the Pallisers had for ages been known as staunch Whigs and Liberals—might be a matter for question. But that she had a right to her own lover she thought that there could be no question. As they were sitting in the cab he could hardly see her face, but he was aware that she was in some fashion arming herself against opposition. "I am sure that this makes him very unhappy," continued Silverbridge.

"It cannot be altered," she said.

"It will have to be altered."

"Nothing can alter it. He might die, indeed; or so might I."

"Or he might see that it is no good, and change his mind," suggested Silverbridge.

"Of course that is possible," said Lady Mary very curtly, showing plainly by her manner that the subject was one which she did not choose to discuss any further.

"It is very good of you to come to me," said Lady Mabel, kissing her new acquaintance. "I have heard so much about you."

"And I also of you."

"I, you know, am one of your brother's stern Mentors. There are three or four of us determined to make him a pattern young legislator. Miss Cassewary is another. Only she is not quite so stern as I am."

"He ought to be very much obliged."

"But he is not—not a bit. Are you, Lord Silverbridge?"

"Not so much as I ought to be, perhaps."

"Of course there is an opposing force. There are the racehorses, and the drag, and Major Tifto. No doubt you have heard of Major Tifto. The major is the Mr. Worldly-Wise-man who won't let Christian go to the Strait Gate. I am afraid he hasn't read his Pilgrim's Progress. But we shall prevail, Lady Mary, and he will get to the beautiful city at last."

"What is the beautiful city?"

"A seat in the cabinet, I suppose; or that general respect which a young nobleman achieves when he has shown himself able to sit on a bench for six consecutive hours without appearing to go to sleep."

Then they went to lunch, and Lady Mary did find herself to be happy with her new acquaintance. Her life since her mother's death had been so sad, that this short escape from it was a relief to her. Now for awhile she found herself almost gay. There was an easy liveliness about Lady Mabel—a grain of humour and playfulness conjoined—which made her feel at home at once. And it seemed to her as though her brother was at home. He called the girl Lady Mab, and Queen Mab, and once plain Mabel, and the old woman he called Miss Cass. It surely, she thought, must be the case that Lady Mabel and her brother were engaged.

"Come upstairs into my own room, it is nicer than this," said Lady Mabel, and they went from the dining-room into a pretty little sitting-room with which Silverbridge was very well acquainted. "Have you heard of Miss Boncassen?" Mary said she had heard something of Miss Boncassen's great beauty. "Everybody is talking about her. Your brother met her at Mrs. Montacute Jones's garden-party, and was made a conquest of instantly."

"I wasn't made a conquest of at all," said Silverbridge.

"Then he ought to have been made a conquest of. I should be if I were a man. I think she is the loveliest person to look at and the nicest person to listen to that I ever came across. We all feel that, as far as this season is concerned, we are cut out. But we don't mind it so much because she is a foreigner." Then just as she said this the door was opened, and Frank Tregear was announced.

Everybody there present knew as well as does the reader what was the connection between Tregear and Lady Mary Palliser. And each knew that the other knew it. It was therefore impossible for them not to feel themselves guilty among themselves. The two lovers had not seen each other since they had been together in Italy. Now they were brought face to face in this unexpected manner! And nobody except Tregear was at first quite sure whether somebody had not done something to arrange the meeting. Mary might naturally suspect that Lady Mabel had done this in the interest of her friend Tregear, and Silverbridge could not but suspect that it was so. Lady Mabel, who had never before met the other girl, could hardly refrain from thinking that there had been some underhand communication, and Miss Cassewary was clearly of opinion that there had been some understanding.

Silverbridge was the first to speak. "Halloo, Tregear, I didn't know that we were to see you."

"Nor I, that I should see you," said he. Then of course there was a shaking of hands all round, in the course of which ceremony he came to Mary the last. She gave him her hand, but had not a word to say to him. "If I had known that you were here," he said, "I should not have come; but I need hardly say how glad I am to see you—even in this way." Then the two girls were convinced that the meeting was accidental; but Miss Cass still had her doubts.

Conversation became at once very difficult. Tregear seated himself near but not very near to Lady Mary, and made some attempt to talk to both the girls at once. Lady Mabel plainly showed that she was not at her ease, whereas Mary seemed to be stricken dumb by the presence of her lover. Silverbridge was so much annoyed by a feeling that this interview was a treason to his father, that he sat cudgelling his brain to think how he should bring it to an end. Miss Cassewary was dumbfounded by the occasion. She was the one elder in the company who ought to see that no wrong was committed. She was not directly responsible to the Duke of Omnium, but she was thoroughly permeated by a feeling that it was her duty to take care that there should be no clandestine love meetings in Lord Grex's house. At last Silverbridge jumped up from his chair. "Upon my word, Tregear, I think you had better go," said he.

"So do I," said Miss Cassewary. "If it is an accident—"

"Of course it is an accident," said Tregeary angrily—looking round at Mary, who blushed up to her eyes.

"I did not mean to doubt it," said the old lady. "But as it has occurred, Mabel, don't you think that he had better go?"

"He won't bite anybody, Miss Cass."

"She would not have come if she had expected it," said Silverbridge.

"Certainly not," said Mary, speaking for the first time. "But now he is here—" Then she stopped herself, rose from the sofa, sat down, and then rising again, stepped up to her lover—who rose at the same moment—and threw herself into his arms and put up her lips to be kissed.

"This won't do at all," said Silverbridge. Miss Cassewary clasped her hands together and looked up to heaven. She probably had never seen such a thing done before. Lady Mabel's eyes were filled with tears, and though in all this there was much to cause her anguish, still in her heart of hearts she admired the brave girl who could thus show her truth to her lover.

"Now go," said Mary through her sobs.

"My own one," ejaculated Tregeary.

"Yes, yes, yes; always your own. Go—go—go." She was weeping and sobbing as she said this, and hiding her face with her handkerchief. He stood for a moment irresolute, and then left the room without a word of adieu to anyone.

"You have behaved very badly," said the brother.

"She has behaved like an angel," said Mabel, throwing her arms round Mary as she spoke, "like an angel. If there had been a girl whom you loved and who loved you, would you not have wished it? Would you not have worshipped her for showing that she was not ashamed of her love?"

"I am not a bit ashamed," said Mary.

"And I say that you have no cause. No one knows him as I do—how good he is, and how worthy!" Immediately after that Silverbridge took his sister away, and Lady Mabel, escaping from Miss Cass, was alone. "She loves him almost as I have loved him," she said to herself. "I wonder whether he can love her as he did me?"

THE FOUNDERS OF PRUSSIA.

THE Teutonic knights were the real founders of Prussia, and that bumptiousness and general self-assertion, which make most

Prussians contrast unpleasantly with courteous Austrians and bluff hearty Bavarians, are inherited from the temper of the grand masters and the different commanders who were their deputies.

Living in a house which was long inhabited by someone of peculiar temperament is said to predispose you to the same habit of mind. It is as if the walls and timbers got saturated with subtle emanations, which are given off as soon as another human organisation is there to receive them. On this principle the Electors of Brandenburg, stepping into the shoes of the grand masters, occupying the very palaces of the Order, became inspired with the same haughty domineering spirit, and looked in the same way more steadily to the main chance than perhaps any other line of sovereigns has done.

The Teutonic knights combined in a remarkable degree business capacity with a sense of their own importance. At first they were the humblest of the warlike Orders, not properly warlike at all as the Templars were. Their chief aim was to nurse and tend the sick and wounded German crusaders. A few Lübeck and Bremen merchants, moved with this pious wish, founded the Order, placed it under the express patronage of the Virgin Mary, got various popes to befriend them, and did a good work so long as there were any Christian settlements in Syria and Palestine. Very humble were their beginnings at the time of our Richard of the Lion Heart (ours, we call him; though, as Mr. Freeman points out, he was the most French and the least English of all our kings). The siege of Acre was going on, and many a poor wounded crusader was left to perish untended under the burning sun. The aforesaid merchants took the sails of their ship, made a tent of them, and therein sheltered and nursed their wounded countrymen. Soon a few German knights joined them, and then they elected a grand master—Walpott von Passenheim, say their records, though a chronicler calls him plain Master Walpott, and remarks that "albeit he was of ignoble birth, he was nevertheless right noble in life and nature." It was in 1192 that they got from Calixtus the Second leave to follow the rule of the Hospitallers or Knights of St. John so far as their waiting on the sick was concerned, and that of the Templars as to their knighthood and their battling with the infidels. Like the Templars they wore a white mantle, but with a black

cross on it, whereas the Templars' cross was red.

By the first quarter of the thirteenth century the different military Orders began to tire of the Holy Land. The Knights of St. John stayed longest, passing first to Cyprus, and then in 1310 conquering Rhodes from the Turks; and when they were beaten out of that by Solyman the Great in 1522 retiring to Malta, which they held till Bonaparte seized it in 1798. The Templars, who were mostly French or English, went back to France and tried to stir up another crusade. But in two centuries the spirit of things had changed. They found themselves in a world where enthusiasm was dead, where devotion to a noble cause was no longer held to be an excuse for lawlessness and disregard of social usages. Philip the Fair and his lawyers had only one aim and object—to carry on the work of creating a solid kingdom out of the discordant elements, Frank, Burgundian, Gascon, Provençal, Breton, each of which was ready at any moment to assert its own independence. The intrusion into the still unformed kingdom of a body of men, owning vast possessions, and bound by no rule except that of their own Order, was intolerable in the eyes of such a king and such ministers. Moreover the Templars were rich and Philip was poor; so he put pressure on the pope; the Council of Clermont condemned the Order in 1312, and its suppression was carried on with such cruelty that James of Molay, its last grand master, who was burnt alive in Paris, has a good claim to be a martyr.

The Teutonic Order managed much better for themselves. They were Germans; and between them and the Templars there was just the difference there is between a vapouring Frenchman, ready to battle for an idea, and a pushing, practical German. So when the Teutonic Order of St. Mary found there was nothing to be done in the Holy Land they came home, and, after a short sojourn at Venice, just sufficient to get those notions of architecture which they reproduced in their grand buildings at Marienburg, they asked leave to go against the Prussians, those "Saracens of the North" in trying to convert whom, in 997, St. Adalbert had lost his life. The Teutonic knights were not the first in the field. In 1106 St. Maynard went with the Bremen merchants who were trading to Livonia, and tried to combine preaching with trading. Warned by the fate of Adalbert he had several forts built, among

them Yaküll or Uxhüll, which afterwards became the city of Riga. Several of his successors were of that warlike stamp not uncommon among mediæval prelates, and the flint arrows and stone hatchets of the Livonians proved but poor weapons against the forces of the Church militant under such leaders as St. Berthold and Albert of Asseldern, who, after a regular crusade up the Dwina, built in 1200 the cathedral of Riga and became its first bishop. This was a generation before the Teutonic knights came in (in 1230) under their grand master Hermann von Salza. Help was sadly needed; for Christian, apostle and bishop of Prussia, had been defeated in a desperate battle that lasted two days, in which all but five were killed of his "knights of the army of Christ." With the Teutonic knights were amalgamated the "knightssword-bearers," another Order that had for some time been fighting the heathen on the Baltic coasts, and together they battled so well that in less than seventy years Prussia was conquered, Christianised, and forced to adopt the German language.

In a paper some time ago* we showed that not Prussia only, but the whole Baltic coast from Courland to Mecklenburg was non-German, peopled mainly with Slaves, mixed, however, with Finns and other non-Aryans. How the Slavonic wave came to sweep on so far west is one of the puzzles of history. The usual explanation is that the large-farm system and slave-culture of the later Romans having almost depopulated Gaul, room was made for an immense influx of Germans. These left gaps into which the Slaves thronged, or were driven by the pressure of Huns and Mongols who were "swarming out of their northern hive," as the old authors expressed it. Anyhow, much of what we now look on as the most German part of Germany is mainly peopled, not with Teutons, but with Slaves, who gradually, since the end of the thirteenth century, have been getting Germanised. The Poles themselves would have lost their language and have been absorbed like their neighbours had not their grand victory of Taunenberg in 1410 stayed the course of Teutonic annexation. The Teutonic knights lasted on, first as conquerors and joint civilisers with the Hanse League, then as a considerable political power, until 1528. The then grand master was Albert of Brandenberg, a descendant of

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, No. 463, Vol. 19, p. 221, "A Patchwork People."

that Frederic of Hohenzollern who was the ancestor of the present emperors of Germany. He was a Swabian burgrave (burg graf, count of a castle); you may see his castle among a group of them close by Tübingen, and may moralise on the different fortunes of the two branches: the elder, Hohenzollern - Hechingen, always were and still are among the smallest of small German princes, lords of a population of less than four thousand; the younger became burgraves of Nuremberg and got rich by protecting that mediæval Birmingham—so rich that in 1417 Frederic aforesaid was able to buy for four hundred thousand gold florins the March of Brandenburg of the Emperor Sigismund. This brought with it the rank of Elector, very valuable at times, inasmuch as would-be emperors, like our Henry the Third's son, often paid heavily for votes. Albert Well, grand master in 1528, saw the princes round him pulling the Church to pieces and establishing themselves on its ruins. That order of things was beginning which, in our fathers' days, gave to our Duke of York the long-secularised prince-bishopric of Osnaburg, and helped a good many counts and barons to more power and larger revenues. So the grand master thought he was doing a good stroke of business when he dissolved the Order, releasing himself and many knights who desired the like freedom from the vows of poverty, chastity, &c. He profited by it, for he managed to get himself made hereditary duke of East Prussia; and by-and-by his daughter—for he took a wife as soon as he was free to do so—married her kinsman, the Elector of Brandenburg, and so East Prussia was added to the electorate.

As for the Order, those knights whose consciences did not suffer them to follow their grand master's example found an asylum at Mergentheim, in Franconia, where their palace is still to be seen, with many of their portraits. The Duke of Wurtemburg has made it into a museum.

But I said the Teutonic knights were the real founders of the Prussian monarchy by Germanising and drawing together the heathen Slave. How did they do this? They fixed themselves at Marienburg, on the Vistula, not far from the Frische Haff, —one of those curious fresh-water lakes separated from the Baltic by a narrow spit of sand, of which there are so many on that coast. Marienburg now seems very much on one side of Prussia, but we must remember that the knights went far east

of the Memel, nearly as far, in fact, as the site of St. Petersburg. Besides Courland they conquered Livonia (with Riga) and Estonia; so that Russia as well as Prussia ought to be grateful to them as civilisers. Their most desperate conflicts were with the Lithuanians, the rear-guard of the Slave migration, who, coming latest of all into Europe, brought with them the purest form of Aryan speech—that which most closely resembles Sanscrit. Very savage and stubbornly heathen were these men; and the knights made very little impression on a country defended by such inhabitants and by a huge belt of forests and marshes.

Von Salza, then, in 1320, fixed himself at Marienburg. You will find there two of the three castles of the Order still tolerably perfect. Indeed, before restoring the central building the architect carefully studied the archives of the knights—now preserved at Königsberg. The whole forms a wonderful example of mediæval brickwork, the general effect being strangely Venetian; clearly the knights brought with them oriental and Italian ideas, and expressed them here on the shore of the Baltic in such material as was to hand. The chapter-house, like that at Salisbury, is supported by one central pillar; the story goes that during one of the many sieges which the place suffered from the Poles, the enemy learnt from a deserter the day and hour when the grand master and all the Order would be assembled in conclave, and tried to shoot down this pillar, so as to bury all the knights under the ruins of their own palace. A cannon-ball fixed in a corner of the chimney is shown in proof of this. The church, singularly beautiful, has outside a huge stucco figure of the Virgin, twenty-six feet high, covered with coloured and gilt mosaic. I wonder people who rush across Europe, from Hamburg to Berlin, and thence to St. Petersburg, and back by way of Vienna, "doing" all the capital cities, should leave out places like Marienburg, and Dantzig, and Königsberg. All three, I think, are well worth a visit; all the more so that you don't see in every collection of prints and photographs pictures of their public buildings, as you are sure to do of the hideous palaces and churches of Berlin, and of those of St. Petersburg, and of St. Stephen's at Vienna, with its portentous depth of roof. I have tried in vain to get a picture of the Marienburg buttermilk-tower. You know the

butter-tower at St. Ouen's, in Rouen? everybody who knows anything of foreign cities ought to know that, and that it was so named because it was built by a tax on the good Normandy butter. But the Vistula is a whole world farther off than the Seine; so probably not one of my readers ever heard of this buttermilk-tower, built (says tradition) by the forced labour of the serfs of the Order, the builders being compelled (one wonders why) to slake their lime with buttermilk. Nor is it easy to get pictures of Königsberg Cathedral, which contains the tombs of many Teutonic knights and grand masters; for when the Poles took Marienburg in 1457, the Order fixed their head-quarters at Königsberg. Dantzig Cathedral, too, another splendid specimen of brickwork, was built by the Teutonic knights; for Dantzig also was one of their cities. I doubt if in any ordinary print-shop you could find a view of it; and yet those slender brick pillars, ninety-six feet high, certainly deserve to be studied by every lover of Gothic.

We think of Dantzig as a Hanse-town; it was not till the decay of the Teutonic Order that Dantzig became a free city; this was in 1454, when it passed under the protection of Poland.

But we must get back to Marienburg, where we noted the Venetian or oriental style of architecture, despite the grand difference that here, on account of the heavy snow-fall, the flat roofs of the south are replaced by steep tile-roofs of enormous height. The brick is well relieved with stone dressings—indeed, a young architect who means to go in for the big ornamental warehouses and blocks of offices which are getting fashionable, can hardly do better than spend a fortnight at Marienburg. He will be worried by a good deal of nonsense in the way of lithograph portraits and relics of high and mighty personages—bits of embroidery by a Prussian princess, for instance—which are shown with as much reverence as if they had belonged to the Virgin Mary herself; but he will find such a group of secular and ecclesiastical brickwork as is scarcely to be found elsewhere.

Moreover, a visit to Marienburg gives a grand idea of the powers of the Order. It was not a select body of nobles. Founded by Lübeck merchants it kept the impress of trade to the last. For bishops it had a very slight esteem. It had its own priest-brethren to make it independent of the clergy outside. Its lay-ministers

were divided into knights, who wore the white mantle and black cross; and brethren, who wore the same cross on a grey cloak, and managed the voluminous accounts of the Order. All three ranks took part in elections and had an equal vote in the chapters. At the election of a grand master there were thirteen electors—one priest, eight knights, four brethren—chosen out of the different "nations" of the German Empire in which the Order had commanderies. Next to the grand master ranked the master of Livonia; then the grand commander, the grand hospitaller (his name recalling the primary object of the Order—to tend sick Germans in Palestine), and so on. The grand master could do nothing without the advice and vote of a full chapter. These were held weekly, both the central chapter at Marienburg and the local chapters of each commandery, for the motto of the order was: "Much rede is good rede." Priests, knights, and brethren all took the same vows of poverty and chastity. Personal property was unknown; a knight's horse and armour might be taken from him and given to another, without his having a word to say in the matter. The life was hard; three days a week nothing but eggs and milk, and on Friday only one meal of those. The knights slept half dressed (you may see at Marienburg their little cells, as well as the dungeons for refractory brethren and disobedient serfs), and had their swords by their sides, in readiness if a sudden raid of heathens should call them to fight for the faith. Such was the Order during its thriving times, when the knights followed the rule, and the whole worked together with that unity of purpose which in later times often made the Jesuits so dangerously powerful.

The Order was a great political power, busy in pushing on amongst heathens—Lithuanians and others—busy, too, in holding its own against Poland, and getting the Polish trade into its hands. It was also a great commercial power, and had close relations with the Hanse, that vast corporation which at one time embraced not only the whole Baltic coast, but the Flemish coast towns, and London itself, besides Riga and Novgorod and other Russian cities, and in Norway Bergen, and in Sweden the whole district of Schonen or Scania, which was regularly fortified off from the rest of the country and turned into a little Hanse republic.

This Hanse, with its eighty-five cities and its army of twenty thousand men, with the spirit of enterprise which took its merchants all over the northern seas as if they had been the vikings of trade; with the energy that led it to work the Swedish copper-mines of Falun; to do anything, in fact, whereby money was to be made; naturally won the respect of the Teutonic Order. A fellow-feeling drew them together. Both knights and Hanse merchants were great travellers in a wonderfully stay-at-home age; both therefore had wider culture and fewer prejudices than most of their contemporaries. Both too had the acquisitive instincts which always mark corporations, and, perhaps, also (witness those Marienburg dungeons and buttermilk-tower) somewhat of the corporate hardness and want of conscience.

The plan on which the Teutonic knights acted was to fill Prussia and their other provinces with German colonies. The tide of emigration was thus turned the other way. Whereas three or four centuries before the Slaves and Letts had come down like a flood driving the Germans before them, and damming them up in Western Germany, from the thirteenth century onwards the little streams of German colonisation penetrated in all directions through the mass of Slavdom, preparing it, at any rate in Prussia—East, Proper, and Polish—to become by-and-by an integral part of Germany.

In Prussia the system of the Teutonic Order was carried out to the full. Here the grand master had no superiors save the emperor, who was seldom in a position to interfere, and the pope, who was kept in good-humour by the frequent "benevolences" which the procurator of the Order, who resided in Rome, handed into the Papal exchequer. Hence there was in Prussia no collection of "Peter's pence," that mediæval tax of which we have heard so much since the temporal power has been taken from the Papacy. Sometimes the pope excommunicated the knights, but they took it very calmly; having priests of their own they felt independent of the clergy, and the grand master Wallenbrod was fond of saying that one priest per town was quite enough, and that he ought to be kept in an iron cage that he might not do mischief, and only be let out when he was wanted. Monks, too, were very few in the dominions of the Order. The only two monasteries of any size were Oliva, just outside Dantzig, now a pleasure palace of

the Queen of Prussia, and Pelplin; and neither of these is in Prussia, but in Ponmerellia, a province purchased by the Order from the dukes of Pomerania. Whenever laymen, like the Merovingian or Karolingian princes, conquered any country, they made much of the Church, and set apart broad lands for bishoprics and monasteries. Not so the Teutonics; one of their priests spoke the mind of the Order when he said: "The fellows who wear hoods would be all very well if they would drink of the purling brook and till vegetables; but as soon as a monk catches sight of a plate of fish he leaves his dish of beans, and a plate of meat draws him straightway from his fish. His hood won't take him to heaven; nor the strictness of his rule unless his heart is sound." Whereas in other countries land given in mortmain rapidly accumulated in the hands of the Church, in Prussia the Order made a law that all gifts to the Church should be resumed in a year and a day.

In 1366 the Livonian bishops protested against being forced to serve on expeditions undertaken without their having been consulted. "It is opportune and necessary," replied the knights, "that you should march with us, not by constraint, you understand, but by virtue of an old and praiseworthy custom." As if they had said: "No compulsion, only you must." The Bishop of Riga claimed the right of sending ambassadors and missionaries among the Lithuanians and Ruthenians. "As many missionaries as you like," was the answer; "but if you send ambassadors please to understand that they must go along with ours, and must do nothing but what they are told." Once, when the Bishop of Ermeland's contingent was behind time, its leaders were soundly rated by the grand master. "I would have you to know," said he, "that it is we who made the bishops, not the bishops who made us."

While insisting thus firmly on their own suzerainty over great and small, the knights left a great deal of power in the hands of their German subjects. They liked local self-government; besides, it would have been hard to attract colonists without giving them some temptation in the way of privileges. The Charter of Culm, for instance, dating from 1233, provides that the burghers shall be wholly independent, shall have even the right of making war on their own account; that as

soon as the rest of Prussia is conquered they shall not be required to serve outside their own district; that the knights shall not be able to buy houses in Culm, and that if any are bequeathed to them they shall hold them subject to the borough laws. These free German colonies in Prussia naturally joined the Hansa; in fact, a third of the whole Hanse trade was soon in their hands. A great deal of this trade was in fish or smoked herrings; and up to the end of the twelfth century herrings were so abundant on the Baltic coast that they could be baled out of the sea by baskets-full. When the fish moved northward, as they did in the early part of the thirteenth century, the Hanse dealers followed, and hence that settlement of Schonen noticed above.

One great help to the growth of the Teutonic Order was their establishing all through their territories an uniform coinage and not allowing it to be tampered with. Trade in those days was greatly hampered, not only by the constant debasing of money whenever a king wanted to cheat his creditors, but also by the multitude of different currencies, every little sovereign prince, every free town, coining a different money. Those who lived at Hamburg before it was annexed to the Prussian empire know something of the daily annoyance and hindrance which this involved. No doubt German immigrants into Poland (there were in the fourteenth century one thousand two hundred German families in Lemberg alone) greatly helped to get the Polish trade into the hands of the Order; but the uniform undebased coinage had a good deal to do with it. Anyhow, the knights managed to keep the Vistula a close river. The left bank was Polish; but the boatmen were their dependents, and were strictly forbidden to land anywhere except on the right bank.

The plan of colonising reminds us of that practised long after by Frederic. A tract of land was granted in fee to an "undertaker" (as the man who did a somewhat similar work in Ireland was called). He contracted to find a sufficient number of inhabitants, who became his vassals, while he was responsible to the Order. Of course there were among these free inhabitants some privileged Poles and Prussians who had deserved well of the knights by siding against their countrymen; but the great bulk of them were German immigrants. Out of the eighty-

five towns in Prussia, seventy-one were founded in the fourteenth century (of course the heathern Pruczi had no towns); and Prussia contains one thousand four hundred German besides Prussian and Polish villages.

In this way the marshes between the western Vistula and its eastern branch, the Nogat, were drained and covered with flourishing colonies. The records of the Order show that they introduced trades of all kinds. The vine was cultivated round Thorn and Dantzig; though this latter city had "more breweries than there are days in the year." The knights owned three hundred and ninety mills; they built ships, which they sold to Flemings and English; they improved the breed of cattle by importing big cows from Gothland; they took care of the forests; hindering that waste which has done so much mischief in France and India, and even in Australia and America; using the vast tracts of woodland not merely as hunting-grounds, to which periodically the grand master used to invite neighbouring potentates, but also as wild-honey farms. Charcoal, pearlash, and furs, too, were all largely exported, and made the forests an important item in the possessions of the Order.

All this time the taxes were light and the military service by no means burdensome. The knights kept up a murderous war with the Lithuanians, and at last wrested Samogitia from those stubborn Pagans; but they did most of the fighting themselves, aided by their Prussian serfs, who formed their irregular horse—their Cossacks or Uhlans. The townsfolk (the German colonists) were only required to act as militia in their own districts. Every change in warfare was speedily adopted by men who were bent on "making the best of both worlds." The bow, which they borrowed from their Saracen enemies, was as terrible to the Pruczi as the fire-arms of Cortez were to the Mexicans. By-and-by they became great in artillery; at Marienburg, in 1408, a cannon was cast which weighed two hundred quintals, and to make balls for which they had to shape the boulders which are the only stone on that coast.

Such was the way in which what is now Prussia was prepared to be the flourishing state that it is—as different from Poland and Lithuania and Russia as Ulster is from the rest of Ireland. It was Germanised during the thirteenth and fourteenth

centuries by the careful steady effort of the Teutonic knights.

No doubt trouble came ; the stubborn Lithuanians were at last converted to Christianity, and, joining the Poles, proved more than a match for the knights, who, of course, had no longer the pretext of raising a crusade against them. All through the fifteenth century the Order was decaying ; taxes became heavier ; the free German peasants were put on the same footing as Poles and Prussians, and forced to serve in the regular armies. Then the cities, fearing that the same fate would befall them, called in Poland ; and after much disastrous fighting what is now called "Polish Prussia," including Culm and Dantzig, was in 1466 ceded to Poland. The grand master (who henceforth lived at Königsberg) had to do homage to the king of Poland for the rest of Prussia, and continued a very secondary kind of potentate till (as we saw) in the person of Albert of Brandenburg he developed into a wholly temporal prince with a new title.

Still, though during their later years they were under a cloud, and in order to make head against overwhelming odds were obliged to become hard masters, the Teutonic knights had done a grand work. One of them, in the fourteenth century, said with pride : "All our townsmen and countryfolk live orderly, and are well looked after. We don't oppress any ; we lay no unlawful burden on any ; we don't claim what is not ours of right. God be thanked, all our subjects enjoy benevolent and even-handed justice." The prosperity which this mode of governing (so rare in those days) had brought about may be judged from the losses of the fifteenth century wars. Records are extant of the villages destroyed between 1411 and 1414, with the loss in cattle and corn ; and for several of these villages the loss is estimated at nearly ten thousand pounds apiece—a vast sum when we remember that a sheep then cost two shillings, and other things in proportion.

The great glory of the knights is that they anticipated the policy of the Great Elector and his successors. They did so, not only in the matter of German colonisation, but in the partition of Poland, which was seriously meditated at the end of the fourteenth century. Had Poland been then divided, much after trouble might have been spared, and a greater breadth of country brought under civilisation ;

for Slave countries, unless well permeated with German colonisation, have hitherto been like ropes of sand unable to hold together, and therefore making little way in the career of progress.

MIST-WRAITHS.

WHEN morning stands above the purple hills,
Heavy with sleep, half-hearted for her work,
The mist cloud gathers till the darkness fills,
The sun shines fitfully across the murk,
And then the south wind gently breathes her way
Across the mountains letting out the day.
When evening falls, the mist-wraiths come and go
Across the silence with their pale grey feet,
They clamber up the hills, as if to know
The hidden secrets there, that are so sweet
No mortal learns them save when death's thin hand
Leads them away into that quiet land.

I think the mists take form as night comes by,
Walking with sleep, across the suffering land,
And souls inhabit those weird wraiths that fly
In graceful wreaths, like spirits hand in hand,
Aye bodiless, yet have they shape and form,
Their life is now a calm that ne'er knows storm.

Or are they fancies breathed by weary men
Who have not strength to clothe their thoughts
with words,

Or unsung songs that shall be chanted then
By those who'd be as vocal as God's birds,
Yet cannot sing ; for earth holds firm and fast !
No songs are strong until that hold is cast.

No ; I feel sure those wraiths are long dead souls,
Who visit thus the earth they loved so well,
Who step across the wan white stream that rolls
Between the dead and living like a spell,
Gliding as evening falls, with shrouded face,
And damp cold garments, o'er the sleeping place.

Oh ! weary spirits, when I feel ye pass,
Your clammy fingers seem to touch my eyes
That fair would see life as it is ; alas !
You stretch between me and the summer skies ;
Ghosts of the past—the present ne'er can be
Pure and unscathed while thus you're haunting me !

A DORMANT ACCOUNT.

ONE morning towards the latter end of the year 1878, I read aloud at the breakfast-table the following advertisement from that day's *Times* :

"Fifty pounds reward. Pocket-book lost in 1873.—Lost on a Saturday or Sunday evening in December, 1873, or possibly early in the following week, either in the centre aisle of Backlersbury Chapel, or in a street, shop, cab, or river steamer, a pocket-book in Russia leather, with spring clasp and gilt edges, containing a bank-book and other papers of the greatest importance to the owners. Whoever will bring it with its contents to S. M. P., care of Wise and Wolf, Solicitors, — Street, E.C., will receive the above reward."

"Well!" cried my father-in-law testily—he was in a very bad temper that morning ; "what have we to do with the man's pocket-

book? Body and soul of me, Fred, you are amusing."

"Please don't swear, papa," said my wife severely, for she does not like anyone to put me down but herself. It was rather hard upon her father to call his harmless expletive swearing; but he bore it submissively, for Kate is the autocrat, not only of the breakfast-table, but of the whole household. However, it is his own fault that he is under petticoat government, for he is a widower, and it was at his very earnest request that we came to live with him soon after our marriage. The arrangement is rather inconvenient for me, as it involves early rising and hurried breakfasts, for High Elms is nearly an hour from the City, and as junior partner—we are Hedges and Frampton, Bankers—I have to be in Lombard Street every morning at ten, or soon after. Mr. Hedges, my father-in-law and senior partner, takes things far more easily, but on this particular morning he was also going up by the early train.

It was an anxious time for people in our line of business. All kinds of rumours were in the air, and the strongest houses did not feel themselves over safe. There was no panic as yet indeed, but all the materials for one were brewing. And thus my partner felt it incumbent upon him to be at his post, although for my own part I fancied I could have done as well without him.

In the railway-carriage going up to town there was some talk of the curious Times advertisement just mentioned. Our neighbour, Sir Samuel Pigot, was of the party; and as he was known as an attendant at Bucklersbury Chapel, and one of its main supports, a handle was afforded for a little gentle chaff. It was insinuated that he was the S. M. P. of the advertisement initials, which probably stood for Samuel, M.P. He was known to be not a little proud of his senatorial honours. Sir Samuel took it all very well. He even admitted that he had lost a pocket-book of the same description as the one advertised for; and about five years before. It was stolen, indeed; his house having been broken into, and his wife's diamonds carried off at the same time. There had been nothing of value in the pocket-book, however, and the thieves, who were now suffering penal servitude for the robbery, were welcome to keep it at far as he was concerned.

Mr. Hedges took no part in this conversation. He was generally talkative and

affable enough, but this morning he sat in his corner silent and preoccupied, the Times before him and his gold eye-glasses on his nose, but not reading or seeming to pay attention to what was going on. When we reached the bank, our chief cashier, Mr. Jenkins, came as usual into the private office for instructions. He had the Times in his hand, and he too began to talk about the advertisement for the pocket-book.

"Body and soul, man!" cried my partner angrily, "I have heard of nothing but this rubbish since I got up this morning."

Jenkins vanished in a huff, but made his appearance again when Mr. Hedges had gone out. Jenkins had been my mentor and guide in banking matters, and was accustomed to speak his mind freely before me.

"It was not in mere idle gossip that I spoke of that advertisement," he began. "It reminded me of a curious incident that occurred before you came into the firm, and I felt sure it would throw light upon a matter otherwise inexplicable.

"It was just about this time of the year," went on Jenkins, "a little before four o'clock in the afternoon, with a thick fog outside, and for the matter of that, inside as well, for the gas-lights in the bank had halos round them, and the clerks could hardly see what they were about. Just then two people came in, a man and a woman, and asked to see 'the master.' I enquired their business, and the woman—she had a nice soft voice and did all the talking—replied: 'We want to leave some money, to open an account.' I asked if they had an introduction, and the woman handed me a letter, but it was not for us, it was addressed to the manager of some joint-stock bank. I told the woman where to go, but still she hesitated, looking out rather blankly at the thick fog. 'You are a bank all the same, sir, I suppose,' she said; 'we've got a good bit of money about us, and don't want to carry it further.' I shook my head, for I thought she meant by a good bit of money a hundred pounds or so, and the couple were not at all like our class of customers. But at that moment Mr. Hedges, who must have been listening, came forward in something of a temper. 'Body and soul, Mr. Jenkins,' he cried, 'you take a great deal upon yourself to turn customers away from our doors,' and took them up himself. I felt rather foolish, I must say, when they drew out notes amounting to ten thousand pounds.

"It's a little fortune that's been left us, and that we want kept safe for a while. We don't care about interest or anything of the kind, only to know it's safe and ready when we want it."

"Well, the money was paid in and an account opened in the names of Samuel and Mary Pike, and we gave them a pass-book, which they put into a big pocket-book, and went out.

"The notes had been stolen," I hazarded, as Jenkins paused in his recital and looked at me askance.

"Not at all, sir. There was no difficulty about the notes. But soon after these people had gone the pocket-book was found lying under a morsel of blotting-paper. Mr. Hodges took it himself, sealed it up, and sent a porter with it to the address given. The man returned with the package. Mr. Pike had left that morning. The house was a lodging-house, and no address was known. 'Very well,' said Mr. Hodges, 'I'll put the packet on one side till it's called for.' But it never was called for."

"Probably Mr. Hodges sent it through the post."

Jenkins screwed up his eyes incredulously.

"But, what's more extraordinary, the money has never been touched either. There it is still—ten thousand pounds to the good. It's entered now as the 'dormant account.' Curious, isn't it, Mr. Frampton?"

I certainly thought it curious. It was no business of mine, but I could not help speculating as to whether there was any connection between the morning's advertisement and the circumstance I had just learnt. It was possible to conceive of persons coming to a strange bank, leaving their money, and neglecting to take note of the place where they had left it. But that anyone should let the matter sleep for five years, and then begin to make a stir about it, seemed quite inexplicable. However, the pressure of business soon drove the matter out of my head.

There was an uneasy kind of movement in affairs that afternoon. Certainly nothing like a run upon us, but what might be called a trickle, money running out faster than it came in, and customers looking in on one pretext or another, as if to satisfy themselves that matters were all right. My partner's calm composure was, however, most reassuring. He had a splendid old-world manner about him that was very

effective with our old-fashioned clients. So effective that many of these who came to draw remained to pay, and at closing time the total of the day's transactions showed nothing startlingly abnormal.

But when the strain of the day's business was over Mr. Hodges looked a good deal troubled and shaken. He was fain to lean upon my arm as we left the bank together, intending to walk to the station. The streets were so muddy that we were glad to secure a passing cab at the corner next the Mansion House. In crossing the pavement my partner slipped, and would have fallen but for my arm.

"Body and soul!" he cried; "this asphalte is a disgrace to the century!"

A man and woman, poorly-dressed, sallow, and miserable-looking, were standing close by, staring aimlessly about them. They were near enough to hear my father-in-law's exclamation.

"Do you hear that?" cried the woman, and the two pushed their way to the cab door, and peered in eagerly. But the bank-porter, who was following with bags and wraps, pushed them on one side, and a policeman bearing up at the same time, the suspicious-looking couple sheered off.

Mr. Hodges looked white and faint—I was alarmed for the moment—but he soon rallied, and by the time we reached High Elms was nearly himself again.

He made a great effort to be cheerful and easy before his daughter. It was of great importance in her delicate state of health that she should be kept free of all trouble and anxiety. And thus we did not dare to say a word before her of the critical state of affairs in the City. But she had her own private sources of worry. She was very nervous about robbers, and there had been several burglaries in the neighbourhood, and suspicious characters had been seen prowling about. Even daylight was no protection, for some of the robberies had been effected in the daytime; and she was sure that there was no occasion for both of us to leave her all day long for the sake of that wretched bank. We had a few guests at dinner that night; Sir Samuel Pigot and one or two more.

"Don't be uneasy, Mrs. Frampton," said Sir Samuel. "I'm obliged to go to town to-morrow; but I shall be back to luncheon, and after that I shall be always about. In case of alarm give two strokes on the gong, and I'll be with you in a jiffy."

Kate seemed really relieved at having a protector so near; as for the servants, she said, there was no knowing whether they were not in league with the robbers; and Sir Samuel had only to cross the lawn to be with us.

Next morning both Mr. Hodges and myself were going up by the early train. There had been some delay in the delivery of the newspapers, and we did not get ours till we reached the station. I turned to the corresponding column in the Times to see if the pocket-book advertisement was repeated. It was not repeated, but an equally singular one took its place.

“Body and Soul.”—Fifty pounds reward will be given for the earliest information of the name and address, in strict confidence, of a gentleman making habitual use of the above expression. Apply to Wise and Wolf, Solicitors,” &c.

It was my partner’s turn this morning to undergo a slight roasting at the hands of his fellow-travellers. But it was seen that he was very seriously annoyed and disgusted, and the subject soon dropped.

As soon as we reached the bank Mr. Hodges called me into his room, and locking the door, took out of his desk a sealed packet. “It’s no use,” he began, “fighting against fate or the hand of Providence. I can keep the matter no longer a secret from you. The pocket-book advertised for yesterday is here in my possession.

“I have often thought,” he went on, with a deprecating glance at me, “that I ought to have made some effort to discover the owners of these papers; but perhaps the neglect was pardonable. Since yesterday, however, when you persisted in bringing to my notice that advertisement, there has been something more than neglect.”

Mr. Hodges then recounted the story of the deposit of ten thousand pounds which I had already heard from the cashier.

“Well, after all, I don’t see much in it,” I said lightly, when he had finished.

“No, you don’t see it, but I do,” rejoined Mr. Hodges gloomily. “I see that a judgment has come upon me. Any day for the last five years I could have met the demand for that money with ease. To-day we can’t. It’s the last straw you know.”

He hid his face in his hands, and swayed to and fro for a moment as if in pain.

I tried to cheer my partner. There

was nothing but surmise in all this. The money that had lain in our hands so long might stay with us for as long again.

Then Mr. Hodges told me that he had recognised in the sinister-looking couple who had followed us to the cab the very people who had made the deposit. No doubt they had recognised him also, had recalled his habitual expletive. Hence the advertisement of this morning. And really this last was a very effective way of getting the information. Some of our friends would certainly run to Messrs. Wise and Wolf with the information required. Would it not be better to get the start of them?

Jenkins was called in. He was directed to go to Messrs. Wise and Wolf, and, without giving any definite information, to try and open a negotiation. He must gain time, in fact, so that we might ascertain the real motives of the enquiry. Jenkins returned after a very short absence. Somebody had been there before him about the “body and soul” advertisement, and Wise and Wolf had got all the information they wanted. And the somebody was—Sir Samuel Pigot.

“Then it’s all over,” murmured my partner, sinking once more into the stupor of despair.

“After all,” I urged, “why should we assume that our mysterious customers are about to withdraw their balance?” Everything went to show that we had to deal with monomaniacs or eccentrics. Their miserable appearance was not the result of poverty evidently, for who but wealthy people would offer their fifty pounds reward so freely. They were misers probably, who were afraid to touch their money, but who had been disquieted by the recent bank failures. We had only to meet them boldly and cordially. We must ask them down to High Elms. Possibly if we humoured them adroitly they would leave another ten thousand in our hands.

Business was brisk that day—too brisk, indeed, for it was all one way—and the rattle of the scoops and the dull thud of the scales on the counter rang continually in our ears with melancholy significance. In the midst of it all came a telegram from High Elms. It said: “Come at once.” My wife was dangerously ill.

“You must go, Frederick,” said her father, wringing my hands. “You must go, and I must stay here in the breach. My poor girl!”

When I reached High Elms I was

grateful to hear that the danger was a little abated. Kate had had a severe fright, and in consequence a little boy had come unexpected into the world. But both mother and child were likely to live. Enquiring into the cause of alarm I found that Kate in crossing the hall had seen two horrible faces flattened against the glass, glaring in upon her in the most alarming manner. Kate had kept presence of mind enough to give two strokes upon the gong, the signal arranged with Sir Samuel, and had then fainted away.

Sir Samuel had come at once to the rescue, and saw two suspicious-looking people, man and woman, walking off. The servants had seen them too—sallow, repulsive beings, regular gaol-birds, in fact. In the description I recognised at once our mysterious customers.

"You have all made a great mistake," I cried to the assembled household. "Your mistress frightened herself needlessly. These were guests I expected, very worthy but eccentric people, who must be treated with all proper respect."

I despatched at once a servant to the village, to find out if our friends were staying there. He returned presently with the intelligence that they had engaged a room at the Rose and Crown.

As soon as I could leave Kate safely I went myself to the village-inn to see these people, and apologise for their strange reception; but they had gone out, and no one knew where to find them. I left a card and a polite message, hoping they would come up and spend the evening with us—a message that made a profound impression at the Rose and Crown, a house reeking with the smell of tobacco and gin, and a good deal the resort of poachers and other bad characters. Certainly we had to deal with eccentrics of no common order.

When Mr. Hodges came back from town there was good news for him about his daughter. But the news he brought himself was not so good. Clearly there was a set made against us, and to-morrow probably would try our resources to the utmost. But he was confident we should pull through—if we could only fight off that ten thousand pounds. He quite approved of what I had done, and, indeed, proposed to send a carriage down to the village to bring up our friends. But they were evidently very shy people, and I thought it would be quite possible to overdo our attentions.

As we sat in the smoking-room that night talking over these matters there came a tap at the window that made us start guiltily. They had come then! No; it was only Sir Samuel, who had run across to ask the latest news of my wife. His reception was of the coldest. He had been kind certainly in the matter of the day's alarm, but could we forgive his treachery in the matter of the advertisement.

"Was it a friendly or even a gentlemanly act?" asked Mr. Hodges reproachfully.

Sir Samuel made a wry face, and then laughed: "Body and soul! my dear boy, I knew that somebody would peach if I didn't, and to earn fifty pounds in five minutes for a good cause! Of course I gave the cheque to the poor-box. Besides, I had an idea."

"Did you make anything of your idea?" I asked.

"Well, no; I doubt it. But about this daring attempt upon you. To come to the house in broad daylight, the villains."

"Oh, you are all wrong about that," I interposed. "Poor Kate was quite needlessly frightened. They were highly respectable people—eccentric, but really wealthy."

Sir Samuel drew his cigar from his mouth and gazed at me in blank astonishment. "Oh, they are highly respectable people, are they; pray how do you make that out, young man?"

"Frampton is quite right," said my partner. "They are people who have a handsome balance with us."

Sir Samuel seemed thunderstruck. He puffed out great clouds of smoke, rolled his eyes, and altogether behaved in an extraordinary way.

"Now come," he said, tapping Mr. Hodges playfully on the shoulder. "Between you and me and the gate-post, you are making fun of me. That old varmint and his wife who have been staying at the Rose and Crown having a balance with you!"

"Yes, indeed, a very handsome balance, too, extending to five figures."

"After that I'm gone," said Sir Samuel, letting himself out by the window. "Never again will I believe the evidence of my senses."

We were at the bank next morning before the doors were opened to the public, and, sure enough, waiting there on the pavement outside were our two friends,

and a person with them, who, Jenkins said, was Mr. Wolf, the solicitor. My partner and I held a short consultation as to whether we should open our doors at all. The morning's advices were unfavourable. If we were to suspend payment, it would be better to do so while our assets were yet considerable; but bolder counsels prevailed. The doors were opened, and our eccentric customers came in. Our worst fears were realised. Jenkins brought in a cheque written on a half-sheet of note-paper, but stamped and quite regular, signed by S. and M. Pike, for ten thousand pounds.

As already arranged the party were shewn into the bank parlour.

"We are delighted to see you," said Mr. Hodges, smiling cordially, "for I assure you we have been really uneasy at having your money so long in our hands. If you will still honour us with your confidence, we will gladly allow you interest at the current rate."

"No," growled Mr. Wolf, "my clients have just made a purchase through me which requires all their funds."

"In that case I have only to hand you over to our cashier."

"How will you take it?" asked Jenkins, with a coolness quite sublime.

But my partner had sunk back in his chair, his eyes half closed, a look of blank despair in his face.

Meanwhile a man had come into the bank and asked for me. He handed me a slip of paper. It was an attachment in fact from the Lord Mayor's Court, and it interdicted us from parting with any money we might hold belonging to Samuel and Mary Pike, defendants in an action at the suit of Samuel Pigot, knight.

"Saved!" I whispered in my partner's ear. "There's a 'stop' on your clients' account," I said to Mr. Wolf, showing him the slip of paper.

He gave a short cry of rage and disappointment and hurried away. We afterwards heard that he had hastened to lodge an attachment on his own account for costs and money advanced.

The man and woman vanished silently and swiftly.

"Sir Samuel again," said my partner. "We shall have to send him to Coventry."

Still there was no doubt he had unwittingly done us a very good turn. The day passed over without any serious drain upon us, and in the course of another week our position was quite secure. And thus we

were able to watch the progress of litigation for the ten thousand pounds, on the satisfactory footing of stakeholders without any anxiety. The matter is not decided yet, as sundry other claimants have appeared upon the scene. But the facts of the case are pretty well ascertained, and have made clear what was before inexplicable as to the dormant account.

Mr. Pike and his wife had been the undiscovered perpetrators of sundry celebrated robberies of jewels. As long as they had confined themselves to the aristocracy they had done very well. Their plan was not to dispose of the proceeds of their robberies, but to hide the jewels and then open negotiation with their owners for a heavy ransom. In this way they had accumulated a handsome sum, and might have retired with the fruits of their industry and lived at ease on their resources. But in an evil hour for themselves they essayed a last coup, and this time upon the valuable diamonds of Lady Pigot. And now they had to deal with a redoubtable adversary. They soon discovered that there would be no safety in negotiating with Sir Samuel, and disposed of the diamonds abroad for what they would fetch. But Sir Samuel pursued them without rest, and spared no cost in the way of rewards and dourcers, and they found themselves tracked by the police and on the eve of discovery. Despairing of ultimate escape it became a question with them how they should dispose of their accumulations, so as to be able to reclaim them when their term of punishment should expire.

They had no friends they could trust with such a deposit; any investment they might make would be traced, no doubt, and forfeited to make good their depredations. As a last resource, they determined to deposit their fortune with some bank under their real names, not those under which they were known to justice; relying on being able to make good their claim at a future time. Chance brought them to us. The leaving the pocket-book on the counter was a premeditated action, as they thus dispossessed themselves of any clue to the hoard except that of their own knowledge of its whereabouts. The prudence of this course was attested when next day they were arrested and consigned to prison. They got off, cheaply as they thought, with a sentence of five years' penal servitude. But, unluckily for them, when they came out of prison neither of them could

member the style of the bank where they had placed their money, and although they prowled about Lombard Street for days and days they could not identify the place. Then they advertised for the pocket-book, hoping that the advertisement would come to the notice of their bankers, or of some clerk or employé who might remember the pocket-book left behind and be tempted to communicate with them. The chance recognition of the voice and exclamation of their banker had suggested a readier way of getting at the knowledge; but in all this they had reckoned without their Sir Samuel. He had never lost sight of them, had ascertained the date of their release from prison, and keeping his eyes always open had kept them open to some purpose; for he will probably get back the value of his wife's diamonds and the expenses he incurred in hunting down our unfortunate customers, besides the costs of the prosecution. What is left, after all that, is not likely to enrich anybody.

SET IN A SILVER SEA.

BY B. L. FARJEON.

THE PROLOGUE.

THE LEGEND OF THE SILVER ISLE.

PART II. THE EXPIATION (CONTINUED).

His hut being built, he set to work upon the task he had determined to perform. Cutting down a huge pine-tree, he dragged it, inch by inch, to a clearing in front of his hut. The labour was herculean, and no man but one possessed of enormous physical strength and amazing inward sustaining power could have accomplished it. He lopped off the branches, and cleared the tree of all excrescences, and when the huge plain trunk was before him, he began to fashion it into the image of the Saviour stretched upon the Cross. The base of the tree, which was of astonishing girth, formed the apex of the design, and admitted of the carving of the outstretched arms. In storm and sunshine, by night and day, the man pursued his work. He lived upon roots and water, and passed through sickness and fever without abating one jot of his energy, in which, could it have been witnessed, would have been discerned the consuming strength of despair and remorse concentrated upon one supreme effort. The seasons changed; the leaves grew green and withered, and again enjoyed their lives of youth and beauty, and the man never ceased from his labour. Year after year

passed, and still the man was employed upon the task. His form could be dimly seen by the islanders in the plains and valleys, and after a time he was looked upon as something more than mortal. No man ventured near him, but he dwelt in the minds of all. Women spoke of him with hushed voices, and children, looking up to the heights upon which he worked, quickly shut their eyes as though a blight would have fallen on them had they continued to gaze upon the strange shadow which never for a moment seemed to rest from its labour. At length, after a decade of years had passed, the priest of the Silver Isle called the old men around him, and announced his intention of visiting the sinner, saying humanity demanded it. His story was still fresh in the minds of the white-haired men, and although not one of them, with the exception of the priest, would have touched the sinner's hand in friendship, time had weakened their resentment against him.

"Terrible was his crime," said the priest, "terrible has been his self-inflicted punishment. It will be a work of mercy to pour oil upon his wounds."

They offered to accompany him, but he said he would go alone; it would be best. So, with their sanction, he departed, and when he returned, told them in a voice broken by emotion the story of his mission.

"When he saw me walking up the mountain's side towards him, he stood and watched me. I am old, and my limbs are feeble, but he made no effort to assist me; he simply waited to learn my errand. I was supported by God, or I should never have reached his hut. So rugged is the road, and so beset with difficulty and danger, that I often had to creep upon my hands and knees for an hour and more, and to walk long distances on narrow precipitous paths where a slip of the foot would be fatal. I arrived at the end of my journey on the noon of the second day, and stood face to face with the man whose word for many years was law in our isle. Ah, my friends! you would not recognise him, so changed is he. You will recall him as he was in the pride of his youth, a tall and handsome man, lithe and erect, with stalwart limbs, and eyes bright as an eagle's. All this strength and beauty have vanished, as though they had never been. His body is but skin and bone, his hair is white, his hands are long and lean, his face is pitifully haggard, he is wasted almost to a shadow. Remembering what he was, remembering

that I had nursed him on my knee when he was an innocent child, my heart overflowed into my eyes as I gazed upon the wreck of grandeur and nobility I saw before me. I held out my hand to him; he kept his arms folded on his breast. I addressed him in words of kindness; he replied not a word.

"If," I said, "your vow of silence weighs upon you, and prevents you from answering me, I absolve you from it. In God's name, I absolve you. Through me, His priest, He bids you speak, He bids you pray."

"I saw that he knew the meaning of my words. It would not have been strange had he, living for so long a time his terrible life of loneliness, lost all understanding of his language. But he had not; he followed my words, but he made no response to them. I knelt and prayed. I prayed for him, a sinner; in his name I made to God a confession of his crime; for him and for myself I humbled myself before the Divine Throne, and supplicated for mercy and forgiveness. He did not, would not, kneel beside me; he stood and listened in silence. For an hour I prayed and talked; and the man might have been made of stone, so unmoved did he appear. Faint with my exertions, I asked if he would permit me to enter his hut, and seek for food. He said neither yea nor nay. I entered his hut. Dear friends, my heart bled as I looked around. The walls of the hut are bare, the ground is stony, and there is no place but the earth to rest the weary limbs. During all these years, the man has lived in that drear habitation, with roots for his food, with stones for his bed, without complaining. What mortal can do, I thought, to expiate his sin, this man has done. Surely he is forgiven! Upon the ground inside the hut I found some roots; and these were the only food his dwelling contained. I brought them out, and ate them in his presence, and taking a drinking cup roughly carved from wood, filled it with water from a rivulet close by, and drank. I thought it would soften him to see me partake with a willing heart of his hospitality. I did more. I took from my wallet some bread, and breaking it in two, I ate one piece, and offered him the other. He did not accept it, and I laid it within the door of his hut. So thoroughly were all my senses engaged in the endeavour to reach the heart of the suffering sinner that up to this time my eyes had not beheld

the marvellous work upon which he has been engaged from the time he left our midst, and when I saw it I contemplated it with wonder. From a pine-tree, measuring in its present form not less than forty feet, he has fashioned the image of Our Saviour stretched upon the Cross, and has produced a work so beautiful and pathetic as must melt the heart of all who are permitted to gaze upon the sacred symbol. Aye, were his sin even greater than it is, you would cry, looking upon this work of expiation, 'God be merciful to him, a sinner!' The Crown of Thorns, the Blood, the depiction of the Agony, are terrible and most exquisite in their truth to life and nature. Never in my life have I beheld so miraculous a conception, and I did not doubt that he intended to set it up in some suitable place, as a lasting memorial of his repentance. I addressed him again.

"When I last spoke to you," I said, "I offered to bless you, and you refused. At that moment I did not understand the meaning of your refusal to accept the blessing of the minister of God; afterwards, it was clear to my mind. You deemed yourself not worthy. My son, let me bless you now!"

"I spoke in vain. It seemed as if human effort were powerless to sap the fortress of silence in which his soul was entrenched. As before, he refused my blessing, and I felt that he did so still out of a sense of overwhelming unworthiness. If in the depths of his nature he was stirred by my appeal, he showed no sign of it upon the surface. I prepared in sorrow to depart, and as I turned to go I said:

"Fain would I leave some ray of light behind me. Not alone out of my own sense of duty did I come here to-day. The wish has long been in my mind, and before I put it into execution I called around me the chief men of the isle, old men who knew and loved you in the past. They urged me to see you, and offered to accompany me, but I thought it best to come unattended. It would be false if I were to tell you that you hold the place in their minds you held in the days gone by; that can never be again. But in some undefinable way you live still in their hearts. You are to them as a son might be to a parent whom he has deeply wronged and sinned against, but to whom he is bound by ties of blood and early affection. On the Sabbath day, in the old

church yonder where you have so often knelt, we shall pray for you. Think of it, and kneel with us when the time for prayer arrives. We shall be together in spirit, and you may be grateful to know that you are not entirely shut out from the sympathies of men. Truly I may say our hearts are filled with sorrow for your unhappy fate.'

"While I spoke these last words, I saw a moisture dim his eyes. He could not control the heaving of his breast, but his limbs obeyed his iron will. It gladdened me to perceive that the thought that those by whom he was once honoured did not hold his memory in complete abhorrence conveyed comfort to the wretched man. He uttered no word. In silence he watched my departure, and did not move while I was in sight. Dear friends, never shall I forget the misery of this man. Self-condemned, he lives his life of suffering, and no punishment his fellow man could inflict could exceed that which he has inflicted upon himself. He is but the shadow of what he was, but his inward strength must be enormous. It cannot last. When his work is finished, when the marvellous figure he has fashioned is set up as a supplication for mercy at the Divine Throne, I foresee that he will die. The vital power is only sustained by the strongest effort of an indomitable will. It will hold out until his task be done, and then the repentant sinner will yield up his soul to its Creator. On every Sabbath day we will pray for him and with him, for assuredly, although he made no response to my appeals, his heart will soften when he is once more alone with conscience and with God!"

From that time forth the sinner was held in pitying remembrance by the islanders, and it grew to be a kind of belief with them that the spirits of his brother and Evangeline were hovering over him through the weary hours, awaiting the time when he should rejoin them in the better world, to greet him with the words, "Brother, thou art forgiven!"

The priest had prophesied truly. The sinner's heart had been touched and softened by the merciful visit, and when the priest was out of sight the man cast himself upon the earth, and bedewed the bread upon his threshold with a blinding passion of tears. And when the Sabbath day arrived he knelt upon the stony ground, and joined his prayers with those of the islanders, and thus became sympathetically connected with his kind. No farther efforts

were made to intrude upon him, and the sinner continued his work until at length the first portion of his task was completed, and he looked down upon the marvellously-carved figure of Christ upon the Cross. What remained for him to do was most dangerous, and seemed impossible of accomplishment; but he had resolved within himself, and only death could stop him.

From the summit of the snow mountain, piercing its bosom, uprose a massive rock, which from the depths looked like a needle tapering to a point. But in fact its upper surface was flat, and not less than fifty feet in circumference. A foothold could be maintained upon the soft mass of snow which lay upon the thick and treacherous ice beneath, and both snow and ice would have to be cleared away before the surface of the rock could be laid bare. Herculean was the design, yet here it was that the sinner had resolved to rear the gigantic figure. This was the altar he had chosen upon which he would fix his symbol to the glory of God.

To drag his carved tree to the spot occupied him full a year. Inch by inch it was moved, uninjured, up the heights, over the chasms, along the precipices. He was as tenderly careful of it as he could have been had it been living flesh and blood he was conveying to a destined goal. When the islanders became conscious of his purpose, they looked upon it as the scheme of a madman.

"It cannot be done," they said. "It is not in the power of mortal man."

"He will do it," said the priest of the Silver Isle.

It appeared as if the man were anxious to conceal his purpose from the knowledge of the islanders until it was achieved; or perhaps, knowing that at certain points he would be in full view of the inhabitants, he was desirous to avoid their continuous personal scrutiny. By whatever motive he was prompted, he now worked only in the night, and rested during the day. Thus a new and weird interest was added to the task, for when in the morning it was observed that a dangerous chasm had been safely crossed, or some great peril had been escaped, many believed that the man had been assisted by supernatural power. Not all were mercifully inclined towards him; there were some whose hearts were still stern and relentless, and who, regarding the work as devoid of holiness, entertained the idea that it was being forwarded by the aid of

evil spirits. As the weeks and the months passed by, the wonder of the islanders who watched the herculean labour, performed unaided by one human being, grew stronger and deeper. Without regard to season or weather, the man worked patiently on, and with each setting of the sun the inhabitants of the Silver Isle, old and young, would gather in clusters over the plains and valleys, to watch his progress. Whatever their own immediate troubles and joys, in the midst of their sorrow and gladness this man was not entirely absent from their minds. He was but a speck upon the mountain side, an insignificant atom amid Nature's terrible and beautiful creations, but there was a pathos in his slow and weary toil that touched the hearts of those who were tenderly inclined. It grew to be a custom to pray inwardly for him, that his offering might be successfully raised, and his sin wiped out. Their imaginations did not deceive them when they cried that they saw blood upon his hands and feet, for not a day passed that his flesh was not torn by the sharp rocks over which lay his road to heaven. Once he fell near the edge of a precipice, and his symbol upon him, and it was not until hours after the rising of the sun that he succeeded in extricating himself. A hundred times the islanders feared to see him hurled into an abyss, thousands and thousands of feet down into darkness, to lie there till the Archangel sounded his trumpet on the Judgment Day. Mothers, waking up in the night, would see in the darkness the phantom of this man toiling, with ropes about his shoulders; would see a white and pitiful face and marks of bleeding feet upon the rocks, and would murmur, as they pressed their babes to their bosoms, "God pity and pardon him, and keep my child from crime!"

So the work went on until the sacred figure rested upon the highest surface of the fatal mount. Then the flat table of the rock had to be cleared of ice and snow, and a foundation dug in it for the symbol to rest in. With unwearying patience this was done, and by slowly building beneath the upper part of the symbol a pile of stones, it was raised into such a position that by a great effort it could be slipped into the rocky bed prepared for it, and there fixed for ever as a sign.

On a Saturday night in September, when the lovely autumn colours were coming into the leaves, all was ready for

the final effort. It had become known that the sinner had nearly completed his self-allotted task, and that the Sabbath sun would shine upon his appeal to the Divine Heart for mercy and forgiveness. The night was intensely dark; but the excitement in the Silver Isle was so great that none who were in health would retire to rest. The islanders assembled on a plain from which, on sunny days and moonlight nights, a clear view of the snow-clad peak could be obtained, and prepared to wait for the rising of the sun. Those among them who remembered the day on which their beloved Evangeline stood in the church waiting for her bridegroom, recalled the circumstances of that fatal time, and saw with their mind's eye the beautiful girl arrayed in the bridal dress which proved her shroud. They spoke in whispers; they moved softly about, and when they smiled, their smiles were sad; gentle thoughts only reigned in their minds. Slowly the minutes passed until midnight came; women wept and strong men trembled. The silences were broken by a gasp, or by a cry of pity springing from the depths of an overwrought soul, or by the involuntary utterance of a short and pitiful prayer. A dread mysterious influence was at work in the solemn thraldom of that awful night. It stirred the hair of men and women; it impressed them with their littleness, their helplessness, their insignificance; it made them humble and afraid. They stretched out their hands, and drew closer to each other, husband to wife, brother to sister, children to their mothers. They derived comfort from personal contact; it was in some sense a protection against the evil spirits which they believed were contending with the angels for the soul of the sinner. Family ties that had been weakened in affection became suddenly strong again; and had two enemies stood side by side, an uncontrollable instinct would have caused them to clasp hands in friendship. Darker and darker grew the night. Shadows glided up and down the mountain sides, and floated upwards from the depths, pregnant with mysterious meaning. Not a sound, not a breath, not a movement escaped the islanders that was not in sympathy with the lonely sinner labouring on the snow-clad peak. Straining their eyes thitherward, their fevered fancies created phantasmagoria which they believed to be real. Black clouds upon the lofty rock were thought to represent the forms of the sinner and his symbol. Now he was putting

the finishing touches to his work of expiation; now he was kneeling, with his head bowed down in prayer; now he was looking upward with tear-stained face, and his arms were raised in supplication to heaven. The islanders paused not to consider that, with a bright light shining on the snowy heights, he would have appeared even to the strongest sight as a mere speck upon the horizon, whose movements it would have been scarcely possible to distinguish. All things were possible on such a night. It was a time for miracles.

"Hark!" said one. "Did you not hear a cry?"

Many were ready to aver that a cry from the mountain top had floated downward to the plain. But had such a cry been uttered, it was incredible it could have reached their ears. Reason would not have convinced them. They were the slaves of imagination.

Among them was the priest who had visited the sinner. Ever and anon his voice was heard in exhortation.

"Terrible was his sin. Terrible is his expiation. Let the memory of the awful deed remain for ever in this dear island home as a sign, as a warning. If temptation assail thee, drive it forth! This sinner has done all that mortal man could do; his repentance is sincere; he has washed his sin with tears of blood. His bloody footsteps mark the path which leads to the holy work he has performed. Christ be merciful to him!"

And all the congregation murmured:

"Christ be merciful to him—and to me, a sinner!"

The snow mountain lay in the eye of the east, and in the early morning the sun was wont to bathe the white expanse with rosy light. So beautiful in this aspect did it look that it seemed to belong to another and more lovely world. As the night progressed, the watchers grew more excited and eager.

"Is it not time for the sun to rise?" some asked.

"Not till another hour has passed," replied the more patient ones.

Shortly after these words were spoken, mutterings of a storm were heard, and it soon burst over the land. No rain fell upon the plains and valleys, but the lightning played over the mountain, and the thunder rolled down its rugged sides. Fiercer and fiercer grew the storm until it attained the most terrible proportions. It shook the earth to its foundations; in the memory of living man dwelt not so fearful an experience. But terrible as it was, it did not divert the thoughts of the islanders from the sinner who had drawn them together. The storm was for him; he was there upon the mountain top, he and his sin, battling with it. God was speaking to him in fire and thunder, and demons and angels were fighting for his soul. Which would conquer? As they gazed towards the gloomy heights, a flash of lightning gashed the dark bosom of the sky; the thunder rolled more fiercely; the heavens appeared to open; and a straight line of fire, suddenly descending from the very heart of the unseen world, stabbed with fatal light the man and his work of repentance, which in that awful moment were hurled into the abyss yawning beneath them.

A cry of horror rose from the throats of the islanders, and in the midst of the dense darkness that followed no man dared to speak, so appalling was the impression produced by the event. The storm abated, and died away in sobs; and presently a faint light dawned in the sky. The light grew stronger, clearer. A hazy, golden mist rolled over the snow mountain, and when its peaks were tipped with the fire of the rising sun, the islanders saw no sign of the sinner and his symbol. God had rejected his work, and had declared that not in this world should the sinner be allowed to work out the full measure of his punishment!

From that day forth, the mountain was looked upon as accursed, and all men avoided it!

THE END OF THE PROLOGUE.

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